

MANHATTAN

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BY

JOHN MYERS O'HARA

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TO
MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM H. HALL

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MANHATTAN

FROM THE FERRY

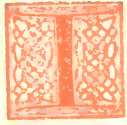


THE sun with sabre of illuming flame
Has rent the storm, and out of darkness rise,
In the belated flare that strikes the skies,
Colossal roofs like summits lost to fame,
Or mountains heaped by Titans to reclaim
The throne of Gods whose thunder still replies;
A mighty bastion, lit for dream's surmise,
Defying heaven with abortive aim.
O shadowed marvel! are thy peaks that fade
A vision or a verity sublime?
Thy promontories, where the storm delayed,
Illusion's dream or the long boast of time?
The ultimate shaft of sunset disappears,
And leaves the night no answer from the years.

THE BATTERY

AROUND the park an alien people swarm,
Great ships go toward the Narrows and the sea;
A whiff of brine comes on the wind to me,
The skies are blue with June, the air is warm;
Afar the Goddess, with majestic form,
Faces the path from lands of dream to thee,
Audacious city, whose sublimity
Assails the vision as a looming storm.
Though wave and wind with summer's respite call
Beyond horizons hidden in the mist,
And all the light and restless moods resist
The sunless canyon's labyrinthine thrall,
Its seething vortice draws the dreamer back,
A futile bubble on the torrents black.

OLD NEW YORK



TS memory lingers in the narrow streets,
And haunts the graveyards in the very heart
Of the irreverent and busy mart,
Whose strident life around their ruin beats;
A spectre that romantic fancy greets,
It makes a sigh for glory's pathos start;
Unheeded near the towers of steel that dart
Sheer as the cliffs the drifting wreckage meets.
The chimes with silver valediction cease,
And as they strike the hour of toil's release,
The belfry doves circle and dip away;
And Trinity, above its sere decay,
Shrinks in the shadow with its lonely spire
As night unveils the monoliths of fire.

THE EAST SIDE



HE littered sidewalks teem with motley breeds,
Strange faces from the orient appear;
The trodden horde of every land is here,
The devotees of half a hundred creeds;
Prolific swarms that thrive like carnal weeds,
Where life, in its futility so drear,
Scatters its chaff as might a charioteer
The dust beneath the wheel that onward speeds.
The Bowery darkens, and in cheerless line,
The lights begin to glimmer in the rain;
A sinister procession as they shine
Where no illusions for the heart remain;
Here all existence seems an effort vain,
All thought and feeling void of the divine.

THE METROPOLITAN TOWER



T lifts its marble lustre in the light
And soars to final beauty with the spire,
Piercing the aureole of azure fire
To rear its glitter on a starry height;
A beacon-crowned and phantom shaft of white
That fills the vision, luminous and entire,
When the last splendors of the sun expire
And its eluding grace is lost in night.
One memory did art to thee entrust!
The fane of bells that basked in loveliness,
Ages o'er Venice, ere it fell to dust;
With peace of prayer abiding where the stress
Of life is at thy feet, O fairer tower,
And thine the task to warn us of the hour.

FIFTH AVENUE



ORDLY and wide, with gradual rise and fall,
As the triumphal way where victors will
Ascend no more the templed Roman hill;
And sweeping upward lordlier than all
Great paven paths, it gleams between the tall
Grandeur of flanking granite; lordlier still
Than the abysmal roads that waters fill,
Worn deep in shadow of the canyon wall.
And when the sun may strike with splendor free,
The glamor of the past exalts the hour;
And up the hill where golden temples tower,
The gorgeous pageant, glittering as the sea,
In long procession to the goal of power,
Moves like a triumph of antiquity.

THE FLATIRONS



O lone colossi of a desert land,
Left desolate by dynasties unknown,
Are these august mysteriarchs of stone,
Immured in life instead of drifting sand ;
They see the glory of the night expand,
And far below upon her flaring throne,
The siren city, making art her own,
Enchant her million slaves from every land.
Under their coronal of stars they seem
Survivors of a propylean file ;
Gigantic columns guarding in a dream
The gateway of the world to Mammon's mile ;
While at their base, and distant on the night,
The phantom river rolls its waves of light.

LONGACRE SQUARE



PAUSED on that declivity to see
The lamps in myriads prolong the day ;
And the grim shadow, baffled and at bay,
Cling saturnine around their sorcery ;
They still retained a morbid charm for me,
But the old glamor of their bright array
The disenchanting years had swept away,
And left the shadow of satiety.
Immitigable in the snare of fire,
I saw the revel like a Moloch loom ;
And lure the moths that perish in its pyre
Reared on the night to beauty and to doom ;
A God whose feet were in the gutter's mire,
Whose ghastly head was hidden in the gloom.

CENTRAL PARK



THE little lake, sequestered from the wind,
Is white with swans that on its bosom sleep ;
A sunken mirror where the skies may keep
The azure of their summer dream enshrined ;
Unsullied by the rim of roofs behind
 Secluding oaks that cluster on the steep,
 Or ripple from the shore whose frondage deep
Is cool with shadow and with fragrance kind.
The tyrant city towers above the trees,
 Nor heeds the Attic idyl in its heart ;
 The grind of wheels and noise of feet depart,
The woods are filled with fabled deities ;
A dream recalls them to their sylvan sway,
 And Mammon yields Arcadia a day.

THE GREEK QUARTER



HE cryptic letters of the golden tongue
The philhellene upon the window sees,
And hears the music of Mæonides
Above the roar by trains and traffic flung ;
Heroic odes to Argive valor sung,
And softer strains of old idyllic ease ;
A solace here for servile destinies
Unknown to Hellas when the world was young.
I sip the coffee of Demetrios
And listen while my thought is far away ;
The swarthy faces of the dim café
Are olive venders on the shore of Cos ;
The wall lamps flicker but I peer across
The blue Ægean sparkling in the day.

THE LIGHTS

A LONG the way of wonder gleam the lights,
An iridescent legion in the air ;
They wall with flame the crowded thoroughfare,
And fling a new romance upon the nights ;
The endless pageant passes and invites,
On foot and wheel, beneath the brilliant glare ;
The glide of pleasure to its silken lair,
With folly's flambeaus burning on the heights.
They climb the dome of darkness and defy
The cosmic beacons hidden in the blaze ;
Usurping, with the splendor that they raise,
The spaces where the constellations lie ;
Supreme till silence settles on the ways,
And stars reclaim dominion of the sky.

RIVERSIDE

ACROSS the slopes whose wooded spaces hide
The Hudson's sweep, rising more royal than
Above the Tiber that of Hadrian,
A tomb looms domed and dim o'er dusk and tide;
All dreams of alien beauty that abide,
The memory of lands beyond the span
Of seas that sing the deeds of god and man,
May reinspire the soul on Riverside.
And now the mists are falling on the far
Wide silver of the river, and a star
Burns in the pines that crown the Palisades;
Slowly the final streak of sunset fades,
And Claremont, with the lamps against its white,
Shines like a limpid jewel on the night.

THE RED ROOM



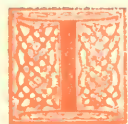
THE fire of lost illusion glows again,
The bubbles float, the deathless goals persuade,
And hope returns to flicker up and fade
In those red walls, Bohemia's domain ;
The reckless ardor leaps in blood and brain,
And wit for wit unsheathes a shining blade ;
The genial thrust and laughing parry made
While fates benign above the table reign.
But youth and dreams in that sonata die,
A threnody of tears that leaves the heart
Once more in memory's shadow ; you and I
Lean back, with vanished zest, and brood apart ;
And pleasure calls, but we are ghosts that gaze
Regretful from the dusk of ashen days.

A FAUN IN WALL STREET



THAT shape so furtive steals along the dim
Bleak street, barren of throngs, this day of June;
This day of rest when all the roses swoon
In Attic vales where dryads wait for him?
What sylvan this, and what the stranger whim
That lured him here this golden afternoon;
Ways where the dusk has fallen oversoon
In the deep canyon, torrentless and grim?
Great Pan is far, O mad estray, and these
Bare walls that leap to heaven and hide the skies
Are fanes men rear to other deities;
Far to the east the haunted woodland lies,
And cloudless still, from cyclad-dotted seas,
Hymettus and the hills of Hellas rise.

THE LITTLE CHURCH AROUND THE CORNER



IN meek seclusion where cathedrals vie,
It shuns the shining dome and spires of pride;
Content to nestle undiscerned beside
The street where wealth and fashion pass it by;
A refuge for the spirit's inmost sigh,
With prayer's consoling hush to none denied;
It keeps the faith for hearts that still confide,
Renunciation that no pomps belie.
And many pass its portal shrine nor stay
The hurried step, impatient of its peace;
But when the pageant vanishes with day
And all the lures of gain and glory cease,
One enters, sad as Dante, long ago,
The convent gate of Fra Hilario.

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JOHN MYERS O'HARA

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